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C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 000392

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BF](#)
SUBJECT: EX-GUARD LEVELS MORE DETENTION CENTER ABUSE
ALLEGATIONS

REF: A. NASSAU 152
[1](#)B. NASSAU 390

Classified By: Charge Zuniga-Brown for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) In an expansive interview with a local daily June 29, an anonymous former officer in the Immigration Detention Center described poor hygienic and medical conditions, indiscipline in the Defense Force guards' ranks, and lax administrative oversight. The ex-officer accused his colleagues at the Detention Center of unprofessionalism, petty corruption, callousness, and even cruelty in their treatment of foreigners detained for immigration violations.

[1](#)2. (U) The source alleged that mistreatment of detainees was routine, and included beatings, sexual assaults, and even a murder of a Haitian migrant followed by a low-level cover-up. The source bemoaned general incompetence in managing the center and official indifference to the rampant problems, allegations of which go back many years, and called on the government to enact reform. The newspaper did not, however, "name names" or provide details on specific cases, including with regard to the alleged killing.

[1](#)3. (U) Separately, the Minister of Immigration told a public forum June 25, not for the first time, that complaints of poor food and treatment at the Detention Center were baseless. He sharply criticized the Bahamian public for attracting and employing illegal migrants and promised continued vigorous enforcement.

[1](#)4. (C) COMMENT: The interview is the latest in a series of investigative reports highlighting longstanding allegations of human rights abuses at the Detention Center (ref A) and insufficient transparency in GCOB investigations of such claims (ref B). The article will maintain pressure on the GCOB to react to criticism with more than cosmetic reforms and assurances that all is well. Yet the Bahamian public is largely inured to accusations against law enforcement and broadly accepts the standard official shrug. Public reaction is especially muted where job-seeking "illegal" non-Bahamians are the alleged victims.
ZUNIGA-BROWN